

*Testimony of*  
***Kate Field***  
***Connecticut Education Association***  
***Before the Education Committee***  
**HB 6757 An Act Concerning Teacher Performance Evaluations**  
*March 1, 2023*

Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Kate Field, and I am the Teacher Development Specialist at Connecticut Education Association. CEA helps active and retired teachers across the state advocate for students, teachers, and public schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in strong support of HB 6757, An Act Concerning Teacher Performance Evaluations.

HB 6757 would eliminate the current statutory requirement for annual ratings for teachers and administrators. As a former teacher and administrator, and current teacher evaluation and professional development specialist at CEA, I have a unique perspective on educator ratings. I was rated as a teacher and as an administrator, and since joining CEA eight years ago, I have helped over 100 districts resolve serious issues related to educator ratings. In addition, I was among the first wave of administrators trained as an evaluator and also served on my district's professional development and evaluation committee (PDEC), responsible for drafting a new evaluation plan consistent with the state guidelines. My background in these various roles has allowed me to view the practice of educator ratings from different perspectives, and I can attest that ratings simply do not work, not for teachers, not for administrators, and not for students.

As a dedicated teacher who loved my students, I was not motivated by ratings to try harder; like most other teachers, I was already doing my best. What I needed to improve was not a grade but meaningful professional development and regular feedback that recognized my strengths but also showed me specific areas where I could improve. The rating felt unnecessarily demoralizing—it focused so narrowly on what could be measured with a number that it eclipsed the other critical aspects of my work that were harder to quantify, like my students' engagement in learning, their social-emotional learning growth, and their success after high school. My evaluator was so busy trying to comply with the convoluted steps of the evaluation process that there wasn't much time left for meaningful conversations about learning to take place. Our conversations centered around my rating rather than my professional growth and its impact on students. Teachers also quickly realized their ratings lacked reliability. Evaluators, even when newly trained, had wildly different expectations and rating practices. This is akin to weighing yourself on different scales and getting a different result every time—you grow suspicious of the numbers on the scales,

unsure which weight is correct. Without trust that the numbers are reliable, ratings are not only worthless, they erode the integrity of the entire system.

Ratings are also problematic from the perspective of administrators. As an evaluator, I had to assign ratings to our library media specialist, classroom teachers, school counselors, and the PE teacher—the process was the same for all of them despite the very different nature of their roles and associated responsibilities. This was extraordinarily frustrating for me and for the teachers involved. It was impossible to meaningfully differentiate the process to reflect the day-to-day work non-classroom educators engage in. In addition, it was so time-consuming to complete all of the steps of the rating process that I was unable to spend as much time as I wanted helping new teachers or supporting the handful of teachers who were struggling with things like classroom management. As an evaluator, I also learned ratings deter teachers from trying new things. Many teachers found it better to keep doing what had worked well in the past best to ensure a good rating rather than try something new and risky. Rather than foster innovation, ratings promote playing it safe. This does not benefit students who need teachers who model the importance of a growth mindset.

As CEA's specialist in teacher evaluation, I work with teachers and administrators across the state to resolve major problems related to educator evaluation. In this role, I have repeatedly seen ratings that were miscalculated, low ratings assigned for punitive reasons rather than performance concerns, and arbitrary ratings based on little to no feedback. My role at CEA has shown me the problems with ratings are not unique to individual school districts but are pervasive across the state.

Educator ratings are unreliable, erode trust between teachers and administrators, and disincentivize innovation and growth. Worst of all, they don't benefit students. In the ten years since educator ratings were first implemented, student performance on standardized achievement measures has remained stagnant. Mental health concerns are skyrocketing. Fortunately, new guidelines for educator evaluation, created by the CSDE and a group of major education stakeholders, including CEA, AFTConnecticut, CABE, CAPSS, and CAS, will be going before the Connecticut State Board of Education this spring. These guidelines focus on professional growth, meaningful dialogue about teaching and learning, and robust, meaningful feedback instead of ratings. Maintaining statutory language requiring educator ratings will conflict with these new guidelines and likely sabotage their success from the start.

Thank you for your time, attention, and the work you do on behalf of public schools in Connecticut. By eliminating ratings, you can open the door to a more innovative evaluation system that will benefit teachers, administrators, and the students they serve.